



New York District Office

# *News Release*

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## ***Brooklyn's Gorilla Coffee Beating Its Chest***

**Brooklyn, NY---** Always percolating in the back of her head while studying towards her English Arts and Literature degree in a local coffee shop in Cleveland, Darleen Scherer had the idea to own and operate her own coffee café.

The relaxing and cozy community atmosphere of that Cleveland shop stuck in Scherer's head as she relocated to New York City and pursued a career in marketing communications. She worked at a number of ad agencies and Internet marketing-design firms where she gained business acumen and marketing skills. She enjoyed her work but found it less than gratifying when she thought about what the rewards might be if she were working that hard for herself.

The impetus to start her on business came after 9/11 when the partners of a design firm she was working for, told Scherer the downturn in business would force them to let her go. For the next year, Scherer worked a number a waitressing and odd jobs to pay the rent while she researched and planned her business. She knew that in addition to her own investment, she would need a loan to realize her plans, so she sought out the assistance of the Baruch College Small Business Development Center. The SBDC helped her fine tune her loan application and introduced her to a loan officer at HSBC Bank. HSBC approved a \$75,000 loan in 2003 which was guaranteed by the U.S. Small Business Administration under the SBAExpress Loan Program.

Of the financial assistance she received, Scherer said, "I could have opened a coffee shop that was not much different from any other, and it would have taken me much longer to get where I am now. The additional financing from the loan allowed me to immediately open the type of business I originally envisioned," added Scherer.

Scherer's marketing talents become obvious in the naming of her company --- Gorilla Coffee. One can't imagine the tie-in between a gorilla and coffee, to the point that the shop becomes a destination point to find out what that is. And her branding is so good that she has to assure locals that Gorilla Coffee is not an outlet of a national chain of coffee emporiums. In actuality, Scherer drew upon the gorilla theme because it was both memorable and she sources coffee beans, from among other places, Ethiopia. Patrons are not disappointed once they are drawn to the store. Gorilla Coffee is a Brooklyn "micro-roastery," roasting beans in-house with a specialized machine on a daily basis to ensure freshness, and affixing "roast dates" on its one-pound bags of beans. The store itself fits in perfectly in Brooklyn's Park Slope neighborhood, with its "classic" counter, tables, chairs and shop-floor coffee-grinder.

Gorilla also differentiates itself in other ways from competitors. It bills itself as a purveyor of coffee that is deep, dark and "mighty strong," its products are organically grown and are Fair Trade Certified. In addition to its offerings of lattes, mochas, espressos and granitas, its signature coffee, coming from a combination of beans from Ethiopia, Mexico and Nicaragua is named "Blendimentosis."

Gorilla Coffee's monthly sales have doubled over the previous year's and Scherer has added two employees to her original payroll of six. The company has also entered the wholesale market, distributing at the Time Warner Building's Whole Foods Store and at several Manhattan restaurants. When she's not busy roasting, brewing, serving and doing paperwork, Scherer takes time to give back to the community by donating beans and brews to charitable events such as the "Renewable Brooklyn Benefit Concert," local non-profits and school fundraisers.

Scherer is not only running a successful business, but she's been able to evoke exactly the atmosphere in her store that she remembers from her college days. Unlike the simians in Ethiopia, for which her company is named and who beat their chests in warning, Scherer surely deserves to beat her chest with pride.

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*Gorilla Coffee is located at 97 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., Brooklyn, NY. All of the SBA's programs and services are provided to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. For more information about the SBA please visit [www.sba.gov/ny/ny](http://www.sba.gov/ny/ny)*